

In the Claims:

Please delete claims 1-5 and add claims 6-13 as follows:

A7 6. (New) A process for producing hot-rolled steel strip from a continuously cast precursor strip, comprising the steps of:

48 B1 receiving, at a first deformation stage having at least one roll stand, the continuous precursor strip directly from a continuous casting plant in which the continuous precursor strip is produced ;

rolling the precursor material through the first deformation stage to form a continuous intermediate strip;

coiling the continuous intermediate strip to form an intermediate coil having an intermediate coil weight comprising at least 40 tons;

uncoiling the coiled intermediate strip to supply a second deformation stage having at least one roll stand;

rolling the continuous intermediate strip through the second deformation stage to form a finished strip; and

producing a plurality of finished coils from the finished strip by coiling the finished strip and severing the finished strip into sections having a desired finished coil weight after said step of rolling the continuous intermediate strip through the second deformation stage.

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7. (New) The process of claim 6, wherein said step of coiling the continuous intermediate strip comprises coiling the continuous intermediate strip using a mandrel.

8. (New) The process of claim 6, wherein said step of coiling the continuous intermediate strip comprises coiling the continuous intermediate strip without using a mandrel.

9. (New) The process of claim 6, further comprising the step of changing the metallurgical characteristics of the intermediate strip by changing a temperature control prior to one of said step of coiling the intermediate strip and said step of rolling the intermediate strip.

10. (New) The process of claim 9, wherein said step of changing the metallurgical characteristics comprises using a flexible speed control.

11. (New) The process of claim 6, further comprising the step of changing the metallurgical characteristics of the intermediate strip by using a flexible speed control.

12. (New) The process of claim 6, further comprising the step of changing the geometrical characteristics of the finished strip by adjusting rolling parameters during said step of rolling the intermediate step through the second deformation stage.